

# 10 Reasons Why the Meat and Dairy Industry is Unsustainable

Like it or not, you can't hide from the facts that eating animal products is becoming a massive problem for everyone on the planet.

By Abigail Geer

Here are 10 reasons why **meat and dairy industry is unsustainable**:

**1. Deforestation** – Farm animals require considerably more land than crops to produce a given amount of food energy. In Central America alone, **40 percent of all rainforests have been cleared in the last 40 years for cattle pasture** to feed the export market, often for U.S. beef burgers. The World Hunger Program calculated that recent world harvests, if distributed equitably and fed directly to humans as opposed to livestock, could provide a vegan diet to 6 billion people.

**2. Fresh Water** – Without a doubt livestock has one of the largest water footprints on the planet. It may be hard to believe, but the standard American diet **requires a whopping 4,200**

**gallons of water per day** (including animals' drinking water, irrigation of crops, processing, washing, etc.), whereas a vegan diet only requires 300. The easiest way to reduce demand for water is to eliminate the consumption of animal products.

**3. Waste Disposal** – Today's factory farms house hundreds of thousands of cows, pigs and chickens and in turn produce astronomical amounts of waste. In the U.S. these **giant livestock farms generate more than 130 times the amount of waste that humans do.** This waste has polluted thousands of miles of rivers and contaminated groundwater, killing marine life and creating huge dead zones.

**4. Energy Consumption** – For that steak to end up on your plate it has to consume massive amounts of energy along the way. Growing the grain with a heavy use of agricultural chemicals to feed the cattle, transporting the cattle thousands of miles to slaughter and market, and then refrigerating and cooking the meat all amounts to an absurd use of resources.

On average, it takes **28 calories of fossil fuel to produce 1 calorie of protein from meat,** whereas it takes only 3.3 calories of fossil fuel to produce 1 calorie of protein from grain.

**5. Food Productivity** – The food productivity of farmland is quickly falling behind population growth, and the only option available to us short of stabilizing population is to cut back on

meat consumption and convert grazing land to food crops. In the **U.S. an estimated 56 million acres of land are producing hay for livestock**, and only 4 million acres are used to grow vegetables for human consumption.

**6. Global Warming** – Global warming is driven by energy consumption, and as noted above livestock are energy guzzling, but that's not all. **Livestock also emit potent global warming gases into the environment.** Cattle, in particular, produce a significant amount of methane. For example, a single dairy cow produces an average of 75 kilos of methane annually.

**7. Loss of Biodiversity** – **Poaching and the black-marketeering of bushmeat is becoming a growing problem** as our planet becomes more and more overcrowded and poorer populations venture into wildlife reserves to kill everything from elephants and chimpanzees to bonobos and birds. Hunters are using logging roads, which facilitate a more rapid invasion, that have been opened up by big multinational companies to poach every animal in sight to sell to people in the cities.

**8. Grassland Destruction** – As the herds of domesticated animals expanded, the environments on which wild animals such as bison and antelope used to thrive were replaced by monoculture grasslands to cater for large scale cattle grazing **Grassland has suffered a massive loss of life.** What was once

a rich and diverse ecosystem is now is a single species monoculture.

**9. Soil Erosion** – With 60 percent of the United States' pastureland being overgrazed, the acceleration of soil erosion and degradation of land is an increasing concern. It takes approximately **500 years to replace just one inch of precious topsoil**. While fertilizers may be able to replace a small amount of nutrient loss, the large inputs of fossil energy to do so is completely unrealistic and unsustainable.

**10. Lifestyle Disease** – The **excessive consumption of meat and dairy** in developed countries combined with environmental pollution and lack of exercise is causing a wealth of preventable health problems such as heart disease. While western civilizations are **dying from strokes, cancer, diabetes and heart attacks** after gorging on meat, poor people in Third World countries are dying from disease brought on by being denied access to land to grow grain to feed their families.

When taking into consideration all of the points made above, it's clear to see that a meat and dairy dependent diet is unsustainable in the long term. Couple that with the threat of rapid population growth — the current U.S. population is an estimated 285 million and is projected to double in the next 70 years — and even greater stress will be placed on our already limited resources, all of which will have to be divided among even larger numbers of people.

Regardless of the role of meat and dairy in nutrition or the ethics of animal rights, on the grounds of economic and ecological sustainability alone, the consumption of animal products is a looming problem for humankind.

If you want to live a low impact lifestyle and reduce your use of the world's precious resources, then try opting for animal free food choices instead.

*Source: care2.com*